

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST[About Us](#) | [DONATE](#) | [Blog](#) | [Mobile App](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Mexico Website \(in Spanish\)](#)

REGIONS

ISSUES

[Reports](#) | [Programs](#) | [Initiatives](#) | [News](#) | [Experts](#) | [Events](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Donate](#)

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD

- 1

0

Nigeria

Nigeria

Freedom in the World 2014

2014

OVERVIEW:

Human rights conditions continued to worsen in 2013, with increasing Islamic militancy in the north, a rising wave of kidnappings in the south, and ethnic and communal clashes in Kaduna and Plateau states. The situation in northeastern states continues to defy remedy, as the militant Islamist group Boko Haram (or "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad") increased its deadly attacks on civilians and government targets; Boko Haram was the second most deadly terrorist group in the world in 2013. Moreover, an October 15 report by Amnesty International revealed that security forces involved in the counterterrorist offensive against Boko Haram committed gross human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary mass arrests, illegal detentions, and torture against citizens living in the affected areas. According to the report, over 950 people died in military custody in the first six months of 2013. Meanwhile, in November, the International Criminal Court (ICC) classified the crisis involving Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces as a non-international armed conflict. At year's end, the ICC also continued its investigations into whether Boko Haram has committed crimes against humanity.

Internal divisions rocked the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). A group of seven governors (known as the "G7") along with other high-ranking officials created a separate faction of the party that they have named the "New PDP." Meanwhile, both houses of the National Assembly (NASS) began deliberations on proposed amendments to the 1999 constitution that include, among other things, the guarantee of equal rights for minorities. In October, during Nigeria's 53rd independence celebrations, President Goodluck Jonathan announced the establishment of an advisory committee that will make recommendations on the convening of a national dialogue to address the main challenges to Nigeria's political and economic stability.

Nigeria's economy, the second largest in Africa, continues to grow by a rate of 6 percent per year. This growth is dominated by the production of oil, which accounts for 95 percent of export revenues and 80 percent of government revenue. However, unchecked government corruption has

2014 SCORES

STATUS

Partly Free

FREEDOM RATING
(1 = BEST, 7 = WORST)

4.0

CIVIL LIBERTIES
(1 = BEST, 7 = WORST)

4

POLITICAL RIGHTS
(1 = BEST, 7 = WORST)

4

resulted in billions of dollars of lost public revenue over the last decade. A report by London-based think tank Chatham House revealed that for the first six months of 2013, over 100,000 barrels were stolen each day from oil facilities through elaborate networks involving Nigerian officials and international actors.

Nigeria has historically played an important role in regional security initiatives in West Africa. However, in July, the Nigerian military began withdrawing some of the more than 1,000 Nigerian troops from the Peace Support Operations in Mali (originally deployed in January) to support internal security operations directed at the insurgency in northern Nigeria. In October, Nigeria gained a nonpermanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES:

Political Rights: 20 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 6 / 12

According to the constitution, the president is elected by popular vote for no more than two four-year terms. Members of the bicameral National Assembly, consisting of the 109-seat Senate and the 360-seat House of Representatives, are elected for four-year terms. Although Nigeria's elections were marred by gross electoral irregularities and violence since the return of multiparty rule, the 2011 elections marked a significant departure from this trend. Following the passage of electoral reforms and the appointment of a new chairman of the electoral commission, domestic and international observers generally regarded the 2011 elections as free, fair, and credible, even in the wake of postelection violence that claimed the lives of 800 people and left 65,000 displaced.

Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP won the April 2011 presidential contest, defeating Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), with a margin of 59 percent to 32 percent. The vote seems to have exacerbated the ethnic and religious fault lines of the country, with Buhari winning mostly in the northern states and Jonathan gaining an overwhelming majority in the south. The CPC filed a petition to the Election Tribunal challenging the results of the presidential election, but in November 2011 the tribunal upheld the decision of the electoral commission declaring Jonathan as the winner. Meanwhile, PDP candidates won a reduced majority in legislative elections in April 2011. In the House of Representatives, the PDP claimed 202 of 360 seats, while the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) won 66, the CPC took 35, and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) garnered 25. In the Senate, the PDP lost its two-thirds majority, winning 71 of 109 seats; the ACN took 18 seats, and the CPC and ANPP won 7 each. The PDP captured 18 of the 26 contested governorships.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 9 / 16

Nigeria's multiparty system provides opportunities for

the participation of opposition parties in the political process. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 29 political parties are currently registered. The most recent are the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Movement (PDM), which were both registered in July. Although the PDP continues to dominate both national and state elections, during the 2011 elections opposition parties made significant inroads, increasing representation in the NASS as well as the number of governorships relative to the 2007 elections. Furthermore, four prominent opposition parties—the ACN, the CPC, the ANPP, and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA)—merged in February 2013 under the banner of the All Progressives Congress (APC), which INEC formally recognized in July. Meanwhile, in November, the APC increased in strength as members of the ruling PDP, including five state governors, defected from the party and joined the APC. Although the formation of the APC and the defection of members of the PDP have the potential of enhancing political pluralism in Nigeria, the ruling PDP has allegedly targeted and used government officials to disrupt the activities of these defectors, especially those with aspirations of contesting the 2015 presidential election.

C. Functioning of Government: 5 / 12

Corruption remains pervasive, and government efforts to improve transparency and reduce graft have been inadequate. During the year there were numerous high-profile corruption scandals. Following the 2012 “Oil Subsidy” scandal that revealed the misappropriation of \$6.8 billion dollars of fuel subsidies, a September 2013 Chatham House report revealed that more than 5 percent of total oil output is stolen by a network of Nigerian politicians, military officers, oil industry authorities, and international actors. In addition, in October President Jonathan ordered an investigation into the purchase of two BMW 7 series armored cars valued at 255 million naira (\$1.63 million) by the cash-strapped Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority under the approval of Minister of Aviation Stella Oduah. In October the Nigerian House of Representatives Committee on Aviation initiated an investigation into the scandal and in December found Minister Oduah culpable for breaching the 2013 Appropriations Act. The House further recommended that President Jonathan reconsider Oduah's appointment as minister.

Although Nigeria has established a robust legal and institutional framework to combat corruption, the government has not effectively prosecuted officials or eliminated the culture of impunity. For example, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigeria's main corruption agency, has successfully brought corruption charges against prominent politicians, such as former governor of Ogun state Otunba Gbenga Daniel in 2011 for allegedly misappropriating 58 billion naira (\$372 million). However, the case is still before the courts. Since 2002, the anticorruption body has secured only four convictions, resulting in little or no jail time. The EFCC is hampered by political interference, an inefficient judiciary, and its own institutional weaknesses, and is

subject to accusations that it targets those who have lost favor with the government.

Nigeria was ranked 144 out of 177 countries surveyed in the Transparency International (TI) 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index. In the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, a public opinion survey by TI, 72 percent of Nigerian respondents believed that corruption had increased “a lot” since 2011. Corruption was perceived to be greatest among the Nigerian Police, political parties, and the parliament.

Despite the passage of the Freedom of Information Act in 2011, which guarantees the public the right to access public records, various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the Media Rights Agenda, have criticized government agencies for routinely refusing to release information sought through the provisions of the law.

Civil Liberties: 26 / 40

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 9 / 16

Freedoms of speech, expression, and the press are constitutionally guaranteed; however there is an increase in instances in which state and nonstate actors violate these rights. A recent report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) documented 143 attacks on journalists in 2012. Of these cases, the government and security forces were associated with 79 percent, while Boko Haram were responsible for 16 percent.

The government frequently restricts press freedom by publicly criticizing, harassing, and arresting journalists, especially when they cover corruption scandals or separatist and communal violence. Moreover, Sharia statutes in 12 northern states impose severe penalties for alleged press offenses. In June, a reporter and a news editor from the Leadership newspaper were arrested and charged in an Abuja high court on counts of forgery for stories published on April 3 and 4 that revealed information about an alleged presidential directive. Earlier in the year, the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFCVB) banned “Fuelling Poverty,” a 30-minute documentary by Ishaya

Bako that details corruption in the oil industry and its impact on Nigeria's economic development. According to the NFCVB, the film is a threat to national security because of its potential to encourage public protests.

Journalists and media entities have also been the victims of attacks by nonstate actors, including Boko Haram. Moreover, cases of violence against journalists often go unsolved. Nigeria ranks 11th in the world for deadly unpunished violence against the press. The most recent case was the January 2012 killing of Enenche Akogwu, a reporter and cameraman for Channels TV, who was shot dead while interviewing witnesses to terrorist attacks in Kano. No arrests had been made in the case as of the end of the year.

There were no reports of government restricting access to the internet or monitoring personal emails in 2013.

Religious freedom is constitutionally and legally protected and is generally respected by the government in practice. Nevertheless, in a few instances state and local governments have undermined religious freedom by placing limits on religious activities and endorsing a dominant religion. Nonstate actors have also attempted to limit religious freedom, especially in the north. For instance, Boko Haram has explicitly targeted Christians and their houses of worship, though Muslims still account for the majority of the group's victims. From January 2012 to August 2013, Boko Haram reportedly attacked approximately 50 churches, claiming the lives of 366 persons. Moreover, sectarian clashes between Muslims and Christians have continued in Kaduna and Plateau states, especially around the city of Jos, which have resulted in the deaths of hundreds and displacement of thousands more.

The federal government generally honors academic freedom. However, some state governments place restrictions on elementary and secondary curriculums by mandating religious instruction, and student admission and faculty hiring policies are subject to political interference.

Moreover, Boko Haram's targeted assault on western education has led to the destruction of numerous primary and secondary schools, the intimidation, injury and death of school children and teachers, and the forced closure of schools throughout the northeast. For instance, according to an Amnesty International report published in October 2013, over 50 schools were attacked in Borno state since the start of 2013.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 7 / 12

The rights to peaceful assembly and association are constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. Nonetheless, federal and state governments have frequently banned public events that have the possibility of inciting political, ethnic, or religious tension. For example, in October, the Kaduna government banned all rallies and social gatherings in the state unless approved by the police. Kaduna-based NGOs criticized the ban as a violation of their constitutional rights of assembly. Additionally, NGOs operating in regions affected by the conflict between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces experienced difficulties in carrying out their work. Members of some organizations faced intimidation and physical harm for speaking out against Boko Haram, while members of NGOs also encountered challenges when investigating alleged human rights abuses of suspected Boko Haram suspects.

Under the constitution, workers have the right to form and join trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and conduct legal strikes. At the same time, the government forbids strike action in a number of essential services, including public transportation and security. Following government abuse of NGOs during the fuel subsidy protests in 2012, the police prevented chapters of the Academic Staff Union of Universities from conducting public rallies to raise awareness about the ongoing labor dispute between them and the federal government in October 2013.

F. Rule of Law: 4 / 16

Judicial independence in Nigeria is constitutionally and legally enshrined. Although the judiciary has achieved some degree of independence and professionalism, political interference, corruption, and lack of funding, equipment, and training remain important challenges. Certain departments, particularly the Court of Appeals, have frequently overturned decisions on election challenges or allegations of corruption against powerful elites, raising doubts about their independence.

Nigerian security forces commit abuses with near impunity, and corruption pervades their ranks. There were numerous allegations of extortion, bribe taking, and embezzlement within the Nigerian Police Force in 2013. However, corrupt officers act with impunity and are often supported by a chain of command that encourages and institutionalizes graft. Various domestic and international human rights groups have called for the government to take steps to stem human rights violations by security forces and the systemic corruption in the police force. For instance, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called for the criminalization of torture, and the establishment of an independent commission to investigate and prosecute allegations of extortion, bribe taking, and embezzlement within the Nigerian Police Force. In January, the police introduced a new code of conduct to stem widespread human rights violations and promote discipline and professionalism among police officers. In May, Inspector General of Police Mohammed Abubakar claimed an 80 percent reduction in police corruption since the removal of police-manned roadblocks in 2012, but this figure has not been corroborated by other sources.

During 2013, Boko Haram continued to pose a serious threat to internal security in Nigeria. Under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, the group has targeted police, military, government officials, and civilians, including Christians but also moderate Muslims mainly in northern Nigerian states. Both the scale and the geographic reach of Boko Haram attacks expanded in 2013. In September, the militant group killed 40 students during an attack on an agricultural college in Yobe state, while in July an attack on a boarding school claimed the lives of 29 students and one teacher. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for numerous other attacks throughout the year. In October, the UN Refugee Agency indicated that more than 10,000 Nigerians have crossed into Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, and 5,000 have been internally displaced because of the conflict.

The government's counterterrorism efforts, led by the Joint Task Force (JTF), have so far produced mixed results. In May, the federal government declared a state of emergency in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, and the JTF's ground and air offensive has weakened the militant group's capacity and led to the capture or death of leading Boko Haram members. However, various international human rights groups have criticized the JTF for committing human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, in the course of their counterterrorism campaign. In an attempt to resolve the conflict, President Jonathan established a committee on Boko Haram in April that would pursue an amnesty and

disarmament program for militants.

Violent crime in certain cities and regions remains a serious problem, and the trafficking of drugs and small arms is reportedly on the rise. Kidnapping and abductions continued unabated, especially in the Niger Delta and the southeastern states of Abia, Imo, and Anambara. Political figures, the wealthy, and foreigners were most frequently targeted. For instance, in September Anglican Archbishop Ignatius Kattey and his wife were kidnapped in Rivers state; they were released a few days after. In 2013, Nigeria recorded one of the highest rates of kidnappings in the world. Some states have introduced stringent anti-kidnapping laws that prescribe long prison sentences, and sometimes the death penalty, for those found guilty. Nevertheless, the conviction rate on kidnapping cases has been low because security personnel and local government officials are often involved in these networks.

Despite legal safeguards against ethnic discrimination in the Nigerian constitution, many ethnic minorities experienced discrimination by state governments and other societal groups in areas of employment, education and housing. For instance, in July the Lagos State Government allegedly removed 70 persons of Igbo ethnicity from Lagos and forcibly relocated them to Anambra state, their perceived state of origin. According to many human rights activists, the forced relocation violated Nigerians' constitutionally enshrined right to reside in any part of the country, regardless of their state of origin.

The Nigerian government and society continue to discriminate against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. Leading domestic and international human rights groups criticized the NASS for passing the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill. The final version of the bill, which imposes sentences up to 14 years for engaging in same-sex relations and up to 10 years for any individual or group that supports or facilitates these relationships, was unanimously approved by the Senate in November, but has yet to be approved by the president at year's end. The new law complements existing state laws that make same-sex relationships illegal; in many southern states these relationships are punishable by up to 14 years in prison, while in northern states, Sharia statutes allow sentences up to the death penalty.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 6 / 16

Freedom of internal movement and foreign travel are legally guaranteed; however, security officials frequently restricted freedom of movement in areas affected by sectarian violence or terrorist attacks by imposing dusk-to-dawn curfews. This was especially the case in 2013 in many northern states, especially those under the state of emergency: Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. Nigeria's largely unregulated property rights system continues to prevent citizen and private business from engaging in the efficient and legal purchase or sale of land and other types of property.

Nigerian women's educational opportunities have improved, and women hold several key governmental

positions: 13 members of the current cabinet are women, while female candidates won 24 of 360 seats in the House of Representatives and 7 of 109 seats in the Senate. Moreover, women occupy key posts in the judiciary, including Justice Aloma Mukhtar, who was appointed in 2012 as the Chief Justice of Nigeria. However, throughout the country, women experience discrimination in employment and are often relegated to inferior positions. Discrimination against women is especially problematic in northern states governed by Sharia statutes, where women's rights have suffered particularly serious setbacks. In addition, women belonging to certain ethnic groups are often denied equal rights to inherit property throughout Nigeria. Women continue to be affected by domestic violence and rape, and the practices of female genital mutilation and child marriage are pervasive. Despite the existence of stiff laws against rape, domestic violence, female mutilation, and child marriages, there have been low rates of reporting and prosecution of these offenses.

Illegal human trafficking to, from, and within Nigeria for the purposes of forced labor and prostitution is reported to be on the rise. A recent report indicated that Nigerian authorities, through the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), have become more successful in protecting human trafficking victims, prosecuting suspected traffickers, and dismantling human trafficking networks. For example, by the end of 2012, NAPTIP began 117 trafficking investigations, 25 of which led to convictions, with a majority of offenders punished with prison sentences. Forced labor is illegal but common, especially bonded labor and domestic servitude, and the government makes very little effort to combat the practice.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)

[About us](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Credits](#)

[Sitio de Freedom House México en español](#)

[Freedom House Mexico Website \(in Spanish\)](#)

[Subscribe](#)